

Getting Teaching and Learning Wrong

Name

Institution

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The separation and fragmentation of students during the learning process is one of the most contentious aspects of traditional instructional models. According to Kohn (2003), the separation and fragmentation of students occurs in various ways. The most common type relates to the separation of students by age. Under this category, instructors seek to improve the efficiency of learning. Beyond the separation by age, some instructors might also group students based on their academic abilities. In such settings, teachers assess the ability of learners to perform specific academic tasks (Kohn, 2003). While most conventional school settings have often relied on these aspects to group and separate learners, it is improbable to identify students who are at the same age level and demonstrate similar learning capabilities. Further, such traditional fragmentation approaches are susceptible to a poor sense of the learning community and the challenges associated with standardized testing.

In reality, the chances of fragmenting learners based on age are minimal owing to the age differences that students enrolling into specific schools demonstrate. In most cases, it is unlikely that learners in the same grade will have precisely similar birth years (Kohn, 2003). For instance, one might observe age differences of at least one year for students in the same classroom. Of more immediate concern is the possibility of identifying learners who are at par in their learning capabilities and born in the same year (Kohn, 2003). In a typical classroom environment, students will often exhibit age differences, albeit rather negligible and varying academic capabilities. Therefore, both conventional forms of fragmenting and separating learners might not be realistic given their disregard for the inherent differences in learners and the difficulties in creating a school community comprising students with unique academic capabilities and varying birth years.

In addition to the difficulties experienced in fragmenting students based on age and academic skills, the use of standardized testing in such settings might be susceptible to underlying weaknesses. It is reasonable to assert that fragmenting students according to the aspects mentioned earlier is part of a broader educational philosophy that seeks to rely on standardized testing. Broadly, the use of standardized testing is inherently detrimental, since it prompts learners to cram and memorize facts and skills. Further, there is no style of testing or instruction reflected in standardized tests. Instead, these tests are part of a broad strategy that overlooks the processes of acquiring learning and focuses solely on how to hold schools accountable for test outcomes (Kohn, 2003). As such, the conventional forms of student fragmentation based on age and academic capabilities breed the larger problem associated with standardized tests.

Overall, a need arises to review the conventional approaches to student fragmentation because of the difficulties in identifying students who are at the same age level and those who simultaneously demonstrate similar learning capabilities. Further, such a realization is called for because of the problems that these strategies breed in the long run. Such challenges include but are not limited to the poor sense of the learning community and the issues associated with testing. In other words, these conventional strategies breed homogeneity in the classroom environment and prompt learners to memorize content since the focus is in a broader group rather than the needs of individual students. Therefore, even though conventional fragmentation strategies appear efficient *prima facie*, they pose inherent challenges that might jeopardize teaching and learning in the long run.

Reference

Kohn, A. (2003). *The schools our children deserve*. Boston., Massachusetts: Houghton Mifflin Co.